



Social networking and bariatric surgery : support or sabotage

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Title: (do not enter authors names here)	Social Networking and Bariatric Surgery: Support or Sabotage
Abstract:	<p>Introduction:</p> <p>Social networking (SN) applications to support weight loss are becoming increasingly available. Sustained weight loss following bariatric surgery requires long term behaviour change. Following years of weight-cycling patients require additional support to prepare for and manage the behaviour change necessary for successful surgery outcomes. Bariatric surgery patient support groups set up by multi-disciplinary teams (MDTs) provide opportunities for additional support for patients. SN may also provide additional networking and support between patients.</p> <p>This paper present qualitative findings indicating how SN can support or sabotage bariatric surgery patients weight loss outcomes.</p> <p>Methods:</p> <p>A longitudinal qualitative study using in-depth semi-structured interviews and Framework Analysis techniques. 16 participants interviewed pre and post bariatric surgery.</p> <p>Results:</p> <p>In the lead up to surgery, SN sites provided a seemingly positive platform of support for patients to share concerns with their peers about the surgery. However following surgery the use of SN forums focussed on comparing weight loss, diet and exercise behaviours between members. In some instances patients reported unhelpful competition between patients, inaccurate medical advice and bullying. Smaller SN support groups were described as cliquey. Patients who had previously been socially isolated because of their weight, reported feeling bullied by new SN peers.</p> <p>Conclusion:</p> <p>SN is attractive to patients prior to surgery but created challenges to patients and MDT's regarding weight management. The apparent lack of control in the information disseminated and behaviour of forum members may be destructive and enforce incorrect behaviours impacting on long term weight loss maintenance.</p> <p>1. Conflict of Interest:</p> <p>None</p> <p>2. Funding:</p> <p>Research relating to this abstract was funded by Collaboration and Leadership for Applied Health Research and Care – South Yorkshire</p>